

Hello from your Mayor's office. I am John Cannon, your Mayor. During today's conversation together we will look at a broad overview of last week's activities within your local city government. We will then talk about a few things on the agenda for this week and dive into a few details and specific cases I will make on behalf of the City of Portage. We will discuss a potential record breaker for the budget here in the City of Portage. We will discuss an important speech I gave at the Exchange Club regarding child abuse and neglect. Lastly, we will discuss how last week your city officials gained insight on the protocol currently in place with regard to the Portage Township Schools and their new school Resource officers.

So let's get started...Being at the right place at the right time, first responders have been known to provide assistance sometimes in heroic situations. As you may be aware, there was a fire at Portage High School last Monday. I was briefed on the situation, and I am happy to report that the damage was minor and there were no reported injuries. As usual, our first responders handled the situation with ease. It is because of this we were able to gather insight on how to handle future emergencies with the school system and their on-duty school resource officers. As you know, seconds matter in emergency situations. I would like to commend an unnamed first responder who truly was, by luck, at the right place at the right time. Driving by the high school during the time of the emergency call, this first responder offered initial communications to the enroute first responders.

Last week I attended a meeting at Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, also known as NIRPC, which is headquartered here in Portage. I learned about additional funds from the State for upcoming road reconstruction projects for the region.

On to a new topic, in a prior conversation together I discussed how Portage is lucky enough to be home to an American Legion post. Portage is also lucky to be 1 of 700 communities throughout America to be home to an Exchange Club. The Exchange Club's programs focus on Youth, Americanism, Community Service, and their main project - the Prevention of Child Abuse. Last week The Portage Exchange Club planted a Pinwheel Garden for Prevention of Child Abuse Month in our downtown. I was privileged to speak at the event. I brought to light the importance of knowing indicators of Child Neglect and Abuse. To paraphrase the speech I gave to the Exchange Club members...In Portage, we recognize the commitment to healthy, happy children. We support the efforts of the Exchange Club of Portage and all others who observe this cause and the mission. I want to restate that the City of Portage is striving to make our community a more loving place for children to grow and thrive without fear. Communities have a great influence in families' lives. Just as plants are more likely to thrive in a garden with good soil and plenty of sunlight and water, families are more likely to thrive in supportive communities. A safe place for children to play is one feature of a supportive community. Other features include a culture that encourages neighbors to get to know and help one another. Your help can build strong families.

Last week I hosted our 2020 budget Summit with Department Heads and an outside accounting firm. Together, we collaborated. We will identify each department's needs, wants, and desires. We will even give options regarding new projects and future projects within the City. This is a yearly process led by your Mayor. I am committed to having a budget to the City Council's Budget committee by Mid-June. After this process is complete, we will write the 2020 budget for the City and submit it to the City Council for approval.

But this year's process is different than any other year. Now, let's talk about the potential record-breaker for our City budget. According to all available records, submitting a budget to the City Council in mid-June is the earliest a budget has ever been submitted to the City Council. You may be asking yourself, "Why is this a big deal?" This is a big deal because it gives more time for discussion. Elected Officials can talk all day about being transparent, but having more time to have conversations in the open puts us on a real path to transparency.

In the coming weeks, PTS and your Mayor's Office will be meeting more often than not to discuss school safety procedures; and YES, your Mayor wants SRO's from the Portage PD, in our schools fulltime. I am committed to make our schools safer for children and teachers. An open and candid dialog is good for this process. I am open to meet anywhere, anytime. It is vital that Portage Township Schools, the Mayor's Office, and the Porter County Sheriff's Department are working together.

So this coming week, I will travel to Indianapolis today, and meet FACE to FACE with the Director of INDOT. I will request funds for the maintenance and reconstruction of Crisman Road between the Willowcreek overpass and the Toll road south of Route 20. During my face-to-face meeting I will be direct and firm. I will present facts regarding the traffic uses for this section of city road. As a preview to you, the residents of Portage, my case will provide that this section of road is in fact is being used as if it were a state highway by INDOT. If it were legally a state highway, the repair bill would be handled by the state, and not the city. As we learned during last week's wheel tax video, money from the state is allocated to each municipality for their own city roads. Without the designation of a state highway, 100% of the funding comes from city resources. This road reconstruction project is nearly a two million dollar price tag. My case to INDOT will state that the City of Portage should not be on the hook for the entire cost.

I do have news about the section of Willowcreek Road north of Central Avenue to the Toll Road overpass. Residents feel this project has been in limbo for too long. It's time to make a decision, and finally get it done. I have just done that. The project will be started in the spring of 2020 and finished by mid-summer.

Letters have gone out this week for our Beautification program of the city with Business cooperation in need. I envision our city to be the envy of the region.

Letters have gone out to neighborhoods and streets that will have major reconstruction going on this spring, with detailed plans and inconveniences that residents might notice. There is more to come. Stay tuned.

I am asked every day if this job is what I expected it to be. My answer is always. I am comfortable in my job. I have prepared my entire adult life for this job. Your suggestions and dialog with your Mayor's office is vital to our success. I am learning each and every day that you are interested and engaged in city government. We would not want it any other way.

Many exciting things are going on in your city and I am happy to be part of it, but we cannot do all that we are doing without your support. Quoting Hellen Keller, "Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much."

Thank you. God Bless you, and see you soon.